

Message Text

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ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

66011

DRAFTED BY:NEA:WBRUBECK:BDF

APPROVED BY:NEA:WBRUBECK

-----111163 210154Z /73

R 210107Z DEC 77 ZFF4

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T STATE 303613

NODIS

CHEROKEE

FOLLOWING REPEAT CAIRO 22130 ACTION SECSTATE DATED DEC 19:

QTE: S E C R E T CAIRO 22130

NODIS

CHEROKEE

FROM USDEL CAIRO NO. 0027

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, XF, US

SUBJECT: SOME REFLECTIONS FROM CAIRO

1. FOLLOWING ARE SOME REFLECTIONS ON CURRENT AND
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PROSPECTIVE FUTURE STATE OF PLAY IN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI
NEGOTIATIONS, BASED ON STERNER'S AND MY PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS
WITH EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI DELEGATIONS, ON HERMANN EILTS' REP
WITH EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI DELEGATIONS, ON HERMANN EILTS'
REPORT OF HIS MEETING THIS MORNING WITH SADAT, AND ON
DISCUSSIONS WE HAVE HAD WITH EILTS.

2. AS NOTED IN REPORT ON TODAY'S FORMAL SESSION (SEPTTEL), EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS THAT CAIRO MEETINGS IS TO ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES IN A HOLDING PATTERN PENDING BEGIN-SADAT MEETING. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, EGYPTIANS CONSIDER IT IMPORTANT THAT CAIRO MEETING BE SEEN TO BE A CONTINUING PROCESS THAT CAN BE ENERGIZED AND RAISED TO FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL ON BASIS OF DECISIONS FLOWING FROM SADAT-BEGIN MEETING. ISRAELIS, FOR THEIR PART, ALSO TELL US THEY ATTACH IMPORTANCE TO KEEPING CAIRO MEETING GOING. THIS IS NO DOUBT IN PART BECAUSE THAT IS THE WAY SADAT WANTS IT. IN ADDITION, HOWEVER, BEN-ELISSAR TOLD US THIS MORNING THAT ISRAELIS ARE HOPEFUL THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO PERSUADE JORDAN TO JOIN THE CONFERENCE ON BASIS OF BEGIN'S WEST BANK-GAZA PROPOSALS.

3. FUTURE OF CAIRO MEETING, AS WELL AS ITS LEVEL, ROLE AND PACE, THUS CLEARLY HINGES TO A VERY LARGE DEGREE ON WHAT HAPPENS IN BEGIN-SADAT MEETING. IT IS CLEAR THAT SADAT IS FOCUSED ENTIRELY ON GETTING AN ISRAELI DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND IS ASSUMING THAT AGREEMENT ON SUCH A DECLARATION WILL EMERGE FROM HIS MEETING WITH BEGIN THIS WEEKEND. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT HE HAS GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO WHAT HE WILL DO IF THIS SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT PROVE TO BE THE CASE, AND EILTS HAS NOT FELT IT APPROPRIATE TO QUERY HIM ON THIS POINT LEST DOING SO CAST CLOUD OVER SADAT-BEGIN MEETING.

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4. FROM WHAT WE HAVE SEEN HERE OF THE RESULTS OF THE BEGIN VISIT TO WASHINGTON, WE WOULD AGREE THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT EVOLUTION IN HIS THINKING ABOUT THE WEST BANK-GAZA. IT NEVERTHELESS IS QUESTIONABLE THAT ISRAELI THINKING WILL HAVE EVOLVED BY THIS WEEKEND TO THE POINT WHERE THEY ARE READY TO MAKE THE KIND OF DECLARATION ON WITHDRAWAL AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION WHICH SADAT HAS SAID HE REQUIRES AS A MINIMUM IN ORDER TO RAISE CAIRO MEETING TO FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL, INVITE BEGIN TO CAIRO, PRESENT OTHER ARABS WITH RESULTS THAT WILL BE GENERALLY PERCEIVED BY RESPONSIBLE ARAB LEADERS AS REASONABLE BASIS FOR THEIR NEGOTIATIONS, AND MOVE INTO DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS ON AN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT. IF THIS SHOULD INDEED BE THE OUTCOME -- I.E., NO SADAT-BEGIN MEETING OF THE MINDS ON A SUFFICIENT ISRAELI DECLARATION -- SEVERAL SCENARIOS ARE POSSIBLE:

(A) BEGIN AND SADAT COULD AGREE THAT THEIR MEETING THIS WEEKEND WILL BE FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER MEETING OF THE SAME KIND, WITH THE CAIRO CONFERENCE MEANWHILE CONTINUING PRO FORMA, OR, ALTERNATIVELY, RECESSING

FOR A PERIOD.

(B) SADAT COULD APPEAL TO US TO PRESS ISRAELIS TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING, PERHAPS IN COMBINATION WITH (A) ABOVE.

(C) SADAT COULD SETTLE FOR WHATEVER DECLARATION ISRAEL IS PREPARED TO MAKE, PUT THE BEST FACE POSSIBLE ON IT, AND PROCEED ON BILATERAL TRACK. AMBASSADOR EILTS BELIEVES THAT THERE MAY BE SOME SMALL MARGIN OF FLEXIBILITY, BUT NOT MUCH AT THIS STAGE.

(D) LESS LIKELY BUT NOT TOTALLY EXCLUDED AT THIS POINT, SADAT COULD ANNOUNCE THAT ISRAEL HAS NOT RESPONDED WITH STEPS MATCHING THE MAGNITUDE OF HIS VISIT TO JERUSALEM
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AND THAT ANY FURTHER EVOLUTION OF EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP AND NEGOTIATIONS MUST BE SUSPENDED UNTIL THEY DO SO. HE MIGHT COUPLE THIS WITH PUBLIC STATEMENT OF WHAT HE BELIEVES WOULD BE A REASONABLE RECIPROCAL ISRAELI MOVE WITH RESPECT TO THE PRINCIPLE OF TOTAL WITHDRAWAL IN RETURN FOR TOTAL PEACE AND A SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION, CALCULATING THAT THIS WOULD BE SEEN IN WORLD AND PARTICULARLY U.S. OPINION AS A REASONABLE EXPECTATION OF WHAT ISRAEL SHOULD DO AND WOULD GENERATE INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC PRESSURES ON BEGIN GOVERNMENT.

5. WITH RESPECT TO WHAT WE MIGHT BE DOING BETWEEN NOW AND BEGIN-SADAT MEETING, I HAVE ONLY ONE THOUGHT. YOUR REPORT TO SADAT ON THE BEGIN TALKS IN WASHINGTON WHICH EILTS DELIVERED THIS MORNING (STATE 301495 AND CAIRO 22051) HAS DONE WHAT WE CAN TO PREPARE SADAT FOR POSSIBILITY THAT HE MAY NOT GET THE KIND OF DECLARATION FROM ISRAEL THAT HE APPARENTLY HOPES FOR FROM HIS FORTHCOMING MEETING WITH BEGIN. I THINK IT EQUALLY IMPORTANT THAT BEGIN BE AWARE OF THE EXTENT OF SADAT'S EXPECTATIONS OF AN ISRAELI DECLARATION FROM THEIR NEXT MEETING. WITHOUT FULL ACCOUNT OF WASHINGTON TALKS WITH BEGIN, I CANNOT JUDGE HOW HARD THIS POINT WAS DRIVEN HOME WITH HIM, BUT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO REITERATE IT, USING AS A HANDLE A REPORT TO BEGIN ON SADAT'S REACTION TO THE ACCOUNT WE HAVE GIVEN HIM OF THE WASHINGTON TALKS.

6. ONE FURTHER POINT: I NOTE FROM EILTS' REPORT OF HIS MEETING TODAY WITH SADAT (CAIRO 22051) THAT SADAT SAID HE HAS NOT YET BEEN PRESENTED WITH "BEGIN PLAN." WHAT SADAT KNOWS OF BEGIN'S PROPOSAL IS BRIEF MESSAGE EILTS CONVEYED TO HIM FOLLOWING FRIDAY TALKS WITH BEGIN IN WASHINGTON PLUS VARIOUS PRESS REPORTS WHICH, AS EILTS
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HAS REPORTED, CAUSED SADAT SOME CONCERN. HE CLEARLY EXPECTS TO HEAR MORE FROM BEGIN THAN HE HAS SO FAR AND HOPES IT WILL BE MORE POSITIVE FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW. WE HAVE DISCUSSED WITH EILTS WHETHER IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO MAKE CLEAR TO SADAT THAT HE SHOULD NOT EXPECT MUCH MORE THAN HE ALREADY HAS HEARD, SO THAT HE WILL NOT APPROACH HIS MEETING WITH BEGIN WITH ANY MISUNDERSTANDINGS. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, OUR JUDGMENT IS THAT TO GO BACK TO SADAT WITH THIS KIND OF MESSAGE WOULD HAVE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON ATTITUDE WITH WHICH HE APPROACHES MEETING WITH BEGIN. WE THEREFORE FEEL IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO LET NATURE TAKE ITS COURSE AT THIS POINT TO GIVE CHEMISTRY OF SADAT-BEGIN MEETING A CHANCE TO WORK, AND ALSO TO SEE WHETHER THERE MAY BE SOME FURTHER EVOLUTION OF ISRAELI THINKING BEFORE THAT MEETING AS A RESULT OF BEGIN TALKS IN WASHINGTON.

7. FINALLY, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO ME TO HAVE AS COMPLETE AN ACCOUNT AS POSSIBLE FOR MY PERSONAL INFORMATION OF THE WASHINGTON TALKS WITH BEGIN. EILTS UNQTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, CAT-A, CHEROKEE 12/21/77, PROGRESS REPORTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE303613
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA:WBRUBECK:BDF
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: N770009-0405
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771231/aaaaaznx.tel
Line Count: 194
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e82116ff-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 157535
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOME REFLECTIONS FROM CAIRO
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, XF, US, (SADAT, ANWAR), (BEGIN, MENAHEM)
To: AMMAN DAMASCUS MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e82116ff-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009